



SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

FY 2005-06

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WORK PLAN FOR 2005-06

This year, staff proposes to study ways to assess the effectiveness of AQMD's Environmental Justice (EJ) Program Enhancements, following the Chairman's initiative over eight years ago. Many of these practices and procedures, such as town hall meetings, multilingual translations, greater community participation in policy decisions and enhanced protection through toxic compound reduction and controls, are now part of the agency's work ethics and working policy. Public comments have been received at both advisory group committee meetings and Board meetings, for development of tools or methodologies to gauge the impact of EJ initiatives and EJ enhancements on the public. Staff will evaluate this issue and meet and confer with the public in response to this question.

In addition, the following items are logical extensions or continuations of previous EJ Work Plans and are recommended for further consideration in FY 2005-06.

1. School Site Selection Guidance Document Outreach

Since the School Site Selection Guidance Document is complete, staff will conduct a comprehensive outreach program throughout the four-county region to inform school personnel about the document and encourage them to reference it to consider air quality issues and how to best protect students from the harmful impacts of air pollution and toxic air emissions as they select school site locations.

As part of the outreach, AQMD staff will distribute the document and provide an overview on how local school districts can use it effectively.

Public Comment:

Staff is encouraged to include local governments and planning agencies as part of the planned outreach program to better inform these groups of the Guidance Document and its recommended actions.

Response: Agreed

2. Enhanced AB 2588 Air Toxics Website

Toxic compounds emission data is now accessible on the AQMD website. The public can search for a summary of emission data by facility, zip code, or facility ID number by making sequential menu selections www.aqmd.gov/Community/EJ/AB2588.

Based on comments from AQMD advisory group members, staff will expand the information available to include information on health risks of the most common air toxics and links to other websites for related information.

3. Enhanced Permit Information Access on AQMD's Website

This enhancement from the FY 2004-05 EJ Work Plan entails posting approximately 500,000 active and inactive permits on the AQMD website. While staff initially planned to provide the information via basic search capabilities, advisory group members requested more expanded capabilities to access the permits.

Staff plans, in the coming year, to provide expanded search capabilities to improve public access to permits and Hearing Board information on the web.

Public Comment:

When the Public Notices and Draft Permits are placed on the website, will the requestor be required to know the facility identification number in order to view the permit information.

Response: No. The search fields will include search by zip code, by company name, by city, by county and also within a specific timeframe.

Public Comment:

How will staff guarantee that no expired or inactive permits are posted on the website?

Response: Extensive effort has been taken to keep the database current. Only equipment-based permits will be posted (no RECLAIM or Title V).

Public Comment:

It would be good to have a Users Guide for the public to use as part of the Public Notices so that they have a better understand of the notice language and actions.

Response: Staff will develop a Factsheet or Users Guide to accompany this page.

4. Implementation of the Air Quality Institute

As part of the 2004-05 EJ Work Plan, AQMD outlined the creation of an Air Quality Institute to address the EJ information needs of newly elected or appointed officials, such as:

- Federal Legislators: (Congressional members and staff)
- State Legislators: (Assembly Members, State Senators and their respective staffs)
- Local Elected Officials: (Mayors, City Council members, School Board Members and other agency members)

- Key Stakeholders: (community leaders, business leaders, and participants in Chamber leadership classes)

As identified above, the Institute also would focus on community education, as well as briefings for new policymakers. An Air Quality Institute Task Force will lead in the development of curricula, formatted for presentations of various lengths, which will cover environmental justice, land use decision-making processes, and other air quality-related topics. The Task Force also will identify partners (i.e. League of California Cities, chambers, etc.,) and opportunities to “piggyback” on existing programs, (i.e., workshops and leadership seminars) to help reach the Institute’s targeted audiences. A detailed proposal is being provided to the Governing Board for this item, for funding consideration, separately.

Public Comment:

Include Planning Commissioners as part of the targeted stakeholders.

Response: Agreed

Public Comment:

The Institute should not be an advocacy group, but focused on education with a broader and balanced membership.

Response: Agreed

5. MATES III Study Community Outreach

Due to the unusual amount of rain last fall and winter, the Governing Board approved the continuation of the MATES III sampling period through March 2006. After the data is analyzed and the results are available, staff will begin a series of community briefings at several monitoring site locations to inform residents of findings within their neighborhoods.

Community meetings will be coordinated through the host city in order to advise and involve local government leaders as AQMD staff informs constituents about the comprehensive study and the potential implications, such as new control strategies or plans that may be developed in response to the MATES III results. The meetings also will offer the opportunity for community input regarding the study and efforts to improve local air quality.

Public Process

The draft document was released for public comment in September 2005. Presentations were made to the Environmental Justice Advisory Group, Local Government and Small Business Assistance Advisory Group, Ethnic Community Advisory Group and the Home Rule Advisory Group.

Staff also met with representatives of environmental justice organizations throughout the four-county region.

Comments received on specific topics from these meetings have been summarized in the attached draft workplan. In addition, general comments received are also recorded below for completeness.

Environmental and Community Group representatives expressed support for AQMD's overall EJ Program. The business groups agreed that it is good policy to take stock of what has been done and reevaluate goals based on programmatic needs. It is important to have integrated program elements and qualitative analysis. Business groups asked what viable metric would be used by AQMD to determine the effectiveness of the Environmental Justice initiatives.

Staff was encouraged to look at partnership opportunities with other organizations, especially in the development of the Air Quality Institute.

Staff was requested to provide the School Site Guidance Document to local governments and city planning divisions so that they are also aware of the document and the recommended actions.

Community members requested expanded search capabilities for Notices of Violation listed on the web site. Currently, searches are limited to 90-day windows. To facilitate searches community members have requested that the search period be expanded to 12 months or at a minimum by quarters. It was also recommended that possibly placing all the requested data search fields under one large umbrella would assist the public in locating the requested information and also facilitating the use of these databases.

Residents also suggested that more attention and effort should be focused on activities that reduce health risks or exposure to pollution rather than public information or education.

Many comments were received from residents living near refineries and ports regarding the importance of reducing toxic emissions and protecting the children in such areas.